

CLAIMS:

1. A blending station apparatus, comprising,

a blending container;

a blending location sized to receive the blending container;

a foodstuffs supply line carrying a foodstuffs, the foodstuffs supply line provided at the blending location to selectively and automatically introduce the foodstuffs into the blending container upon request;

a blending device mounted to the blending station apparatus at the blending location to blend the foodstuffs introduced into the blending container.

2. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an ice supply to directly and automatically introduce ice into the blending container upon request.

3. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:
an ice supply to selectively and automatically introduce ice into the blending container upon request;

a water supply to selectively and automatically introduce water into the blending container upon request.

4. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the foodstuffs comprises a fruit flavored foodstuffs.

5. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the foodstuffs comprises a nutritional supplement.

6. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the foodstuffs comprises a coffee flavored foodstuffs.

7. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a refrigeration system to maintain the foodstuffs supply line refrigerated.

8. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:
a cleaning location sized to receive the blending container;
a cleaning liquid supply line provided at the cleaning location to automatically clean the blending container when placed within the cleaning location.

9. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising at least two foodstuffs supply lines.

10. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising six foodstuffs supply lines.

11. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a peristaltic pump operatively coupled to the foodstuffs supply line to directly and automatically introduce one or more of the foodstuffs into the blending container upon request.

12. A blending station apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a control panel and an information processor operatively coupled to the control panel to input data into the blending station apparatus to automatically prepare a beverage .

13. A method of preparing a beverage at a single location, comprising:
providing a blending container;
providing a blending location sized to receive the blending container;
providing at least one foodstuffs supply line carrying a foodstuffs at the blending location;
providing a blending device mounted to the blending station apparatus at the blending location;
directly automatically introducing the foodstuffs into the blending container upon request;
blending the foodstuffs introduced into the blending container.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising providing an ice supply at the blending location;
selectively and automatically introducing ice into the blending container upon request.

15. The method of claim 13 further comprising:

providing an ice supply at the blending location;

selectively and automatically introducing ice into the blending container upon request;

providing a water supply at the blending location;

selectively and automatically introducing water into the blending container upon request.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the step of selectively and automatically introducing the foodstuffs into the blending container comprises introducing a fruit flavored foodstuffs.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein the step of selectively and automatically introducing the foodstuffs into the blending container comprises introducing a coffee flavored foodstuffs.

18. The method of claim 13 wherein the step of selectively and automatically introducing the foodstuffs into the blending container comprises introducing a nutritional supplement.

19. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of maintaining the foodstuffs supply line refrigerated.

20. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
providing a cleaning location sized to receive the blending container;
providing a cleaning liquid supply line at the cleaning location;
placing the blending container within the cleaning location;
automatically cleaning the blending container after the blending container has been placed within the cleaning area.

21. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
providing a peristaltic pump operatively coupled to the foodstuffs supply line;
actuating the peristaltic pump to selectively and automatically introduce the foodstuffs into the blending container upon request.

22. The method of claim 13, further comprising providing two foodstuffs supply lines at the blending location.

23. The method of claim 13, further comprising providing six foodstuffs supply lines at the blending location.

24. A method of automatically preparing a beverage, comprising:
providing a plurality of beverage ingredients;
selecting two or more of the plurality of beverage ingredients for mixing together;
automatically and directly introducing the selected beverage ingredients into a blending container;
blending the selected beverage ingredients held within the blending container;
dispensing the blended ingredients into a beverage container for consumption.
25. The method of claim 24, further comprising:
placing the blending container within a cleaning location after the step of dispensing;
cleaning the blending container.
26. The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of selecting a size of the beverage to be made.
27. The method of claim 24 wherein the step of selecting two or more of the plurality of beverage ingredients for mixing together comprises selecting beverage ingredients from a group consisting of water, ice, and a plurality of fruit flavors.
28. The method of claim 24 wherein the step of selecting two or more of the beverage ingredients comprises selecting the two or more of the beverage ingredients from water, ice, and a plurality of coffee flavors.

29. The method of claim 24 wherein the step of selecting two or more of the plurality of beverage ingredients for mixing together comprises selecting the two or more beverage ingredients from a group of at least six foodstuffs supply sources.

30. A peristaltic pump for a beverage dispensing device, comprising:
a foodstuffs supply tube;
a peristaltic pump housing configured to receive the foodstuffs supply tube, the pump housing having an inlet and an outlet;
a roller assembly operatively coupled to the pump housing, the roller assembly sequentially engaging and compressing the supply tube to create peristaltic action and move foodstuffs through the foodstuffs supply tube.

31. A peristaltic pump for a beverage dispensing device according to claim 30, further comprising:
a guide flange formed in the pump housing, the guide flange configured to direct an end of the supply tube through the outlet of the pump.

32. A peristaltic pump for a beverage dispensing device according to claim 30 wherein the roller assembly comprises a pair of rollers spaced 180 degrees relative to one another.

33. A peristaltic pump for a beverage dispensing device according to claim 30 wherein the roller assembly is automatically actuated upon request.

34. A method of automatically preparing a beverage, comprising:

- providing an ice supply;
- providing a plurality of beverage ingredients;
- selecting a drink size;
- selecting a beverage ingredient;
- automatically introducing a predetermined amount of ice and the beverage ingredient into a blending container based upon the selected drink size;
- automatically blending the ice and the selected beverage ingredient in the blending container;
- dispensing the beverage into a beverage container having the selected drink size.

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:

- placing the blending container into a cleaning location;
- cleaning the blending container at the cleaning location.

36. The method of claim 34 wherein the beverage ingredients comprise a plurality of juice flavors.

37. The method of claim 34 wherein the beverage ingredients comprise a plurality of coffee flavors.

38. The method of claim 34 wherein the beverage ingredients comprise a plurality of sorbet flavors.

39. The method of claim 34 wherein the beverage ingredients comprise a plurality of yogurt flavors.

40. The method of claim 34 wherein the beverage ingredients comprise a plurality of sherbet flavors.

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